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PAGE 01 STATE 032870

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TO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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TAGS: ELAB HU

SUBJECT: REACTION TO EAST-WEST TRADE UNION CONFERENCE
OF JAN. 19, 1974

REFERENCE: BUDAPEST 248

1. IN RESPONSE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE RE OUR REACTION TO SUBJECT CONFERENCE, DEPARTMENT IS INCLINED TO SHARE SOVIET AND EE VIEW THAT CONFERENCE WAS A "LANDMARK" EVENT BUT DOES SO, OF COURSE, FROM QUITE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE. WHILE SOVIET AND EE'S JUSTIFIABLY WELL PLEASED WITH CONFERENCE, DEPARTMENT HAS SERIOUS MISGIVINGS CONCERNING IMPLICATIONS FOR BROAD US FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS IN EUROPE.

2. GIVEN THE TWIN SOVIET LABOR OBJECTIVES OF PROMOTING "UNITY" AMONG THE COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST TRADE
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PAGE 02 STATE 032870

UNIONS OF EUROPE, ON BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, AND OF EXPLOITING THAT "UNITY" IN INTEREST OF GENERATING TRADE UNION PRESSURES ON WESTERN POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SOVIET POLICY POSITIONS ON A BROAD RANGE OF POLITICAL ISSUES, THE JAN. 19 CONFERENCE MUST BE VIEWED AS A SIGNIFICANT GAIN FOR SOVIETS. THESE ISSUES INCLUDE CSCE, NATO, MBFR, EEC, AND THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN EUROPE GENERALLY.

3. THE CONFERENCE WAS AN OUTGROWTH OF LONG-STANDING SOVIET EFFORT TO ORGANIZE AN EAST-WEST TRADE UNION MEETING ON "PEACE AND EUROPEAN SECURITY PROBLEMS". A CALL FOR SUCH A MEETING WAS INITIALLY MADE BY THE POLES IN 1969 THROUGH A CIRCULAR LETTER ADDRESSED TO WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADERS. THE LATTER WERE UNRECEPTIVE TO SUCH A BLATANTLY POLITICAL MANEUVER, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY AGREED TO THE JAN. 19 CONFERENCE IN THE FACE OF PERSISTENT SOVIET PRESSURE. ALTHOUGH THE CONFERENCE WAS OSTENSIBLY CONVENED WITHIN THE GENERAL AND RATHER NEBULOUS FRAMEWORK OF THE ILO, AND MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ALL THAT THE SOVIETS ORIGINALLY DESIRED, IT NEVERTHELESS MARKS A TURNING POINT IN E-W TRADE UNION RELATIONS. IT WAS A PRECEDENT SETTING MULTILATERAL MEETING OF EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CENTERS AFFILIATED WITH THE THREE MAJOR AND IDEOLOGICALLY COMPETITIVE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS, THE ICFTU, THE COMMUNIST WFTU AND THE FORMERLY CHRISTIAN-ORIENTED WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (WCL) TO DISCUSS, IN THE WORDS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTICIPANTS, "MULTILATERAL COOPERATION...ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE WORKING CLASS," INCLUDING "...THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT" AND TO FIND BETTER SOLUTIONS TO "SOCIO-ECONOMIC" PROBLEMS. IT IS LARGELY IN THIS BROADER POLITICAL CONTEXT THAT THE EASTERN PARTICIPANTS HAVE HAILED THE "HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE" OF THE CONFERENCE. GASPAR, MOREOVER, IN A JAN. 26 INTERVIEW WITH "NEPSZABADSAG" IS REPORTED TO HAVE NOTED WITH PARTICULAR SATISFACTION THE POLITICAL DECISION OF THE CONFERENCE TO EXCLUDE THE "OFFICIAL" LABOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND GREECE.

4. FOR THOSE AMONG THE WEST EUROPEANS WHO MAY HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 032870

HARBORED THE EXPECTATION THAT THIS AND FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCES WOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO "REACH THE WORKERS OF EAST EUROPE" AND PERHAPS TO INFLUENCE THEM ON SUCH MATTERS OF TRADE UNION CONCERN AS FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND RELATED TRADE UNION RIGHTS, SOVIET POLITBURO MEMBER AND TRADE UNION CHIEF SHELEPIN STRUCK A RINGING DISCORDANT NOTE. IN WHAT WAS

DOUBTLESS INTENDED AS A WARNING TO HIS EAST EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES AS WELL AS THE WEST EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS..HE POINTED OUT THAT "...THIS COOPERATION MUST BE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN EACH COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND RECOGNITION OF PRESENT-DAY REALITIES."

5. THE DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN OVER THE BROAD POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE IS BASED ALSO, IN PART, ON THE APPARENT EROSION OF RESOLVE AMONG MANY OF THE WESTERN TRADE UNION LEADERS TO MAINTAIN THE IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS WHICH SEPARATE THEM IDEOLOGICALLY FROM THE COMMUNISTS AND WHICH, IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, IS GIVING RISE TO THE PROSPECT THAT THE COMMUNIST TRADE UNIONS OF WESTERN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY THE ITALIAN CGIL AND THE FRENCH CGT AND SUBSEQUENTLY THOSE IN THE EAST, WILL BE ADMITTED INTO MEMBERSHIP IN WHAT HAS BEEN THE NON-COMMUNIST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC). MOREOVER, WHILE THE SOVIET AND EE PARTICIPANTS AT THE CONFERENCE WERE EVIDENTLY WELL COORDINATED--A MEETING OF THE WFTU BUREAU HAVING TAKEN PLACE IN GENEVA IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE CONFERENCE--THE WESTERN TRADE UNION DELEGATIONS WERE, FROM ALL REPORTS, UNCERTAIN OF THE AGENDA AND DIVIDED ON MANY OF THE MAJOR ISSUES. THE BRITISH TUC AND THE GERMAN DGB EVEN NOW ARE PLACING DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS ON WHAT CONCLUSIONS WERE REACHED AT THE CONFERENCE REGARDING OBJECTIVES AND FOLLOW-UP STEPS.

6. REPORTS FROM OUR POSTS INDICATE THAT THE DEPARTMENT IS NOT ALONE IN ITS VIEW OF THE CONFERENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. A NUMBER OF PROMINENT WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE CONFERENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 032870

WAS TAKING THE EUROPEAN LABOR MOVEMENT. ONE PROMINENT ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADER, FOR EXAMPLE, IS REPORTED TO HAVE EXPRESSED THE OPINION OF THE EVENTS DESCRIBED AS "A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM OF EUROPE."

7. ON A RELATED MATTER INVOLVING THE ILO, IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT THE US HAS BEEN AND REMAINS OPPOSED TO A SOVIET CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ILO GOVERNING BODY LARGELY BECAUSE OF OUR VIEW OF THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE COMMUNIST SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE WITH THE TRI-PARTITE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE ILO IS FOUNDED. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SOVIET AND EE'S WILL SEEK TO EXPLOIT THE NEW E-W TRADE UNION CLIMATE REPRESENTED BY THE JAN. 19 CONFERENCE AND SUCCEEDING MEETINGS TO UNDER-

MINE THE US POSITION IN THE ILO.

8. ANY INSIGHTS WHICH THE AMBASSADOR MAY GAIN FROM HIS CONVERSATION WITH GASPAR REGARDING SOVIET AND EE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES IN FOLLOW-UP EAST-WEST TRADE UNION

CONFERENCES WOULD BE OF INTEREST. IT IS THE DEPARTMENT'S GUESS THAT ONCE THEY GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS AND DISPOSE OF SUCH RELATIVELY NON-CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS AS ENVIRONMENT AND POLLUTION, THE SOVIETS WILL PRESS TO MOVE ON TO SUCH "SOCIO-ECONOMIC" PROBLEMS AS THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION--BY WHICH THEY MEAN PRIMARILY THE US BUSINESS PRESENCE IN EUROPE--AND UNEMPLOYMENT, WHICH BY THEIR "DEFINITION" DO NOT EXIST IN THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, AND FROM THERE ON TO OTHER POLITICALLY ORIENTED MATTERS. KISSINGER

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